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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3779

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.), LE, PDEV, SY, IS PBOR
SUBJECT: PLENARY SESSION OF SECRETARY'S PARTY IN BEIRUT AUGUST 3 -- MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM

1. SUMMARY. SECRETARY VANCE AND OFFICIAL PARTY MET WITH GOL DELEGATION LED BY PRIME MINISTER HOSS AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS FOR ONE-AND-A-HALF-HOUR DISCUSSION IN CABINET ROOM AT BAABDA PALACE ON AUGUST 3. PRIMARY TOPICS WERE:

A. CURRENT STATE OF MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS, TO INCLUDE "THRESHOLD" QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA, AND SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES OF THE NATURE OF PEACE, BORDERS AND TERRITORY AND THE PALESTINIAN HOMELAND. THE SECRETARY OUTLINED VARIOUS PROPOSALS TO HAVE PALESTINIANS REPRESENTED AT GENEVA.

B. BILATERAL US-LEBANESE ISSUES, INCLUDING US ASSISTANCE TO LEBANESE ARMY, AND US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

C. (AFTER SECRETARY'S DEPARTURE) INFORMAL DISCUSSION OF SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON, APPLICATION OF RECENT LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN AGREEMENTS, EXPORT-IMPORT BANK ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON.
END SUMMARY.
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2. THE FOLLOWING IS AN UNCLEARED RESUME OF THAT PART OF MEETING OF SECRETARY VANCE AND HIS PARTY WITH PRIME MINISTER AL HOSS, FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS AND SEVERAL FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS AT BAABDA PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, 1235-1355 AUGUST 3 DEALING WITH ME PROBLEM. REPORT ON BILATERAL ISSUES FOLLOWS SEPTEL.

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3. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS OPENED MEETING BY WELCOMING SECRETARY AND PARTY. HE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT SECRETARY'S VISIT TO EGYPT HAD BEEN FRUITFUL AND ASKED SECRETARY FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORT.

4. SECRETARY VANCE THANKED THE FOREIGN MINISTER FOR HIS WELCOME. SECRETARY SAID THAT, SINCE HIS VISIT TO LEBANON IN FEBRUARY, USG HAD SEVERAL USEFUL MEETINGS WITH HEADS OF MIDDLE EAST GOVERNMENTS. AS RESULT, USG NOW BELIEVES TIME IS RIPE TO "MOVE PROMPTLY" TO GENEVA CONFERENCE. ON THIS TRIP, SECRETARY SAID USG WAS SEEKING VIEWS OF VARIOUS PARTIES ON HOW TO NARROW STILL EXISTING DIFFERENCES.

5. SECRETARY SAID PRINCIPAL PROCEDURAL ISSUE STILL WAS QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA. SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES WERE THE OVERALL PALESTINIAN QUESTION, BORDERS AND OCCUPIED TERRITORY, AND THE NATURE OF PEACE. USG HAS SEEN SOME NARROWING OF DIFFERENCES. "THRESHOLD" PROCEDURAL QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION REMAINED "VERY THORNY." USG SEES SEVERAL ALTERNATIVES, BUT DIFFERENCES OF VIEW STILL PERSIST AMONG THE ARAB STATES THRMSELVES AS WELL AS BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAELIS. SOME ALTERNATIVES CONFIDENTIAL

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WERE: A PALESTINIAN VOICE WITHIN A JORDANIAN DELEGATION; A PALESTINIAN VOICE WITHIN AN ALL-ARAB DELEGATION; AN ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION TO SPEAK FOR THE PALESTINIANS; LAST, AND LEAST REALISTICALLY, DEFERRAL OF THE QUEESTION UNTIL THE CONFERENCE ITSELF CONVENES AND REACHES DISCUSSION OF PALESTINIAN ENTITY ISSUE.

6. ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES, SECRETARY SAID THAT SOME REAL PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE ON DEFINING THE NATURE OF THE PEACE. ON THE QUESTION OF BORDERS AND TERRITORY, REAL, DEEP AND DIFFICULT DIFFERENCES REMAINED. SHARPEST DIFFERENCES OF ALL BETWEEN THE PARTIES STILL REMAINED ON QUESTION OF A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND.

7. SECRETARY SAID HE DISCUSSED ALL THESE QUESTIONS WITH EGYPT'S PRESIDENT SADAT. HE WAS CONSIDERING INVITING CONFRONTATION STATE FOREIGN MINISTERS TO CONFER FURTHER IN COURSE OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING IN NEW YORK, AND WOULD DISCUSS THIS IDEA WITH HIS COUNTERPARTS DURING THE PRESENT VISIT.

8. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS ASKED IF QUESTION OF

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PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION WAS NOT A PROBLEM OF
SUBSTANCE, IN ADDITION TO BEING A PROCEDURAL QUESTION.
SECRETARY AGREED IT WAS BOTH. BOUTROS POINTED OUT
THAT, THAT BEING THE CASE, THERE MUST FIRST BE
PROGRESS ON THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE BEFORE THE QUESTION
CAN BE RESOLVED. SECRETARY AGREED THAT CLEARLY A
MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE WAS THE OVERALL PALESTINIAN
QUESTION.

9. BOUTROS ASKED IF PRESIDENT SADAT PROPOSED IDEA OF
HAVING PALESTINIANS REPRESENTED BY A PAN-ARAB
DELEGATION. SECRETARY SAID THIS WAS THE PROPOSAL OF
SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD. BOUTROS ASKED IF ISRAEL WOULD
ACCEPT THE PALESTINIANS AS PART OF A JORDANIAN DELEGATION.
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THE SECRETARY SAID ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BEGIN HAD
AGREED, PROVIDED THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES WERE
NOT "KNOWN PLO." BOUTROS ASKED, WHO HAD PROPOSED IDEA
OF ARAB LEAGUE REPRESENTATION OF THE PALESTINIANS?
SECRETARY SAID ONE OF THE PARTIES HAD PROPOSED THIS AND
ASKED BOUTROS FOR HIS OPINION. BOUTROS RESPONDED THAT
A PROBLEM WOULD BE THE LACK OF COHESION WITHIN THE ARAB
LEAGUE, AND SECRETARY AGREED.

10. SECRETARY ASKED BOUTROS, HOW WOULD INCLUSION OF
PALESTINIAN ISSUE AS AN ITEM ON THE AGENDA AFFECT
ARAB ATTITUDES TOWARDS IDEA OF ARAB LEAGUE REPRESENTATION
OF THE PALESTINIANS? BOUTROS SAID HE BELIEVED THE
PALESTINIANS WOULD NOT ACCEPT THIS AS A SOLUTION, SINCE
IT WOULD NOT GO FAR ENOUGH.

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11. PRIME MINISTER HOSS POINTED OUT THAT ISRAEL HAD A VETO ON ANY POSSIBLE NEW DELEGATION AT GENEVA. HE ASKED IF THERE WERE NOT A FIFTH ALTERNTIVE, NAMELY THAT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD BE REPRESENTED BY PALESTINIAN LEADERS OTHER THAN THE PLO. BOUTROS POINTED OUT THAT THE ARAB LEAGUE RABAT SUMMIT HAD DECIDED THAT PLO WAS SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. BOUTROS ALSO WONDERED IF THERE WERE A REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE PLO, ONE THAT WOULD REPRESENT THE "MASS" OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

12. BOUTROS ASKED WHAT WAS CURRENT US VIEW ON A PALESTINIAN "HOMELAND", AND HOW IT RELATED TO THE NATURE OF PEACE. SECRETARY SAID PRESIDENT CARTER HAD STATED PUBLICLY THAT THERE MUST BE "REAL PEACE," NOT MERELY AN END OF BELLIGERENCY. ON QUESTION OF A "PALESTINIAN ENTITY," PRESIDENT CARTER HAD SAID THAT THIS MUST BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN THE PARTIES.

13. BOUTROS ASKED, GIVEN STILL EXISTING GAP BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAELIS ON QUESTION OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY, DOES THE US HAVE SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE? SECRETARY RESPONDED, STRESSING IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING SECRECY, THAT ONE POSSIBILITY WAS THE IDEA OF A CONFIDENTIAL

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TRUSTEESHIP FOR THE WEST BANK FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, AT THE END OF WHICH SELF-DETERMINATION WOULD BE APPLIED. HE SAID TRUSTEESHIP COULD BE EITHER ISRAELI OR JOINTLY ISRAELI AND JORDANIAN OR OTHER BUT WOULD IN ANY CASE BE UNDER UNITED NATIONS AUSPICES. HE COMPARED CONCEPT WITH THE US TRUSTEESHIP OF MICRONESIA WHICH WE WERE NOW GIVING UP. BOUTROS ASKED IF USG THOUGHT TRUSTEESHIP IDEA WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL THE PARTIES. SECRETARY SAID HE DID NOT KNOW, BUT HE THOUGHT "SELF-DETERMINATION MAKES A GREAT DEAL OF SENSE." HE STRESSED THAT TRUSTEESHIP WAS JUST ONE POSSIBLE IDEA. THERE MAY BE OTHERS.

14. BOUTROS ASKED IF USG THOUGHT ARAB STATES WERE WILLING TO HAVE "REAL PEACE" WITH ISRAEL. THE SECRETARY SAID THIS VARIED BY COUNTRY. IN ANY CASE, NATURE OF REAL PEACE MUST BE NEGOTIATED BETWEEN PARTIES THEMSELVES.

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15. BOUTROS ASKED IF A GENEVA CONFERENCE MIGHT TAKE PLACE IN A SHORT TIME. THE SECRETARY SAID HE HAD NEVER SET AN OCTOBER DEADLINE; HIS VIEW WAS THAT IT SHOULD TAKE PLACE "DURING THE FALL" OF THIS YEAR. BOUTROS ASKED, WHO SUGGESTED PREPARATORY MEETINGS OF FOREIGN MINISTERS IN NEW YORK? THE SECRETARY SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS IDEA WITH THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT ON HIS LAST TRIP, AND THAT IT SEEMED TO BE A GOOD IDEA. HE NOTED THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTERS WOULD BE IN NEW YORK ANYWAY. THE CONTACTS WOULD BE BILATERAL; IF THE VARIOUS PARTIES ALSO WANTED MULTILATERAL CONTACTS, THAT COULD BE ARRANGED AS WELL. THE PARTIES WOULD BE EGYPT, JORDAN AND SYRIA. LEBANON WOULD BE WELCOME IF IT WANTED TO PARTICIPATE. BOUTROS NOTED THAT LEBANON
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HAD ALREADY CLEARLY INDICATED ITS DESIRE TO BE IN ON THE GENEVA CONFERENCE; THE ONLY QUESTION WAS, AT WHAT STAGE. SECRETARY SAID THAT ALL THE PARTIES APPEARED TO WELCOME LEBANESE PARTICIPATION, THEREFORE THE USG HOPES THAT LEBANON WOULD PARTICIPATE IN PRELIMINARY MEETINGS IN NEW YORK, IF THEY TAKE PLACE.

16. PRIME MINISTER HOSS SAID IT WAS HIS PERCEPTION THAT SOME ISSUES MUST BE RESOLVED BEFORE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE CAN CONVENE. THE QUESTION WAS, WHICH ISSUES, AND WHICH COULD BE LEFT FOR CONFERENCE ITSELF? SECRETARY AGREED AND SAID HE THOUGHT PRINCIPAL MATTER REQUIRING PRIOR AGREEMENT WOULD BE AN AGENDA. AGENDA OUGHT TO INCLUDE QUESTION OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY, NATURE OF PEACE, SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS (INCLUDING "GUARANTEES") AND QUESTION OF NAVIGATION RIGHTS. OTHER QUESTION TO BE RESOLVED BEFORE MEETING, OF COURSE, WAS PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION.

17. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION OF OVERAL MIDDLE EAST SITUATION, SECRETARY SAID IT MAY NOT BE CLEAR UNTIL AFTER CONSULTATIONS IN SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER IN NEW YORK WHETHER GENEVA CONFERENCE THIS YEAR IS FEASIBLE.
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